

**ASSEMBLY BILL**

**No. 1999**

**Introduced by Assembly Member Dickerson**

February 18, 2000

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An act relating to conservation camps, making an appropriation therefor, and declaring the urgency thereof, to take effect immediately.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 1999, as introduced, Dickerson. Conservation camps.

(1) Existing law establishes conservation camps, and provides for the transfer of inmates as specified to be housed and employed therein.

This bill would state findings and declarations of the Legislature regarding the benefits to the state of an expanded conservation camp program, and would direct the Department of Corrections to maximize the availability of conservation camp qualified inmates after health and safety requirements are met at other facilities of the department. The bill would provide that conservation camp qualified inmates shall not be used to perform routine maintenance to the exclusion of meeting present and future conservation camp needs. This bill would declare the intent of the Legislature to continue to expand the conservation camp program, and would direct the Resources Secretary to provide by November 1, 2000, and each year thereafter, a report to the Legislature and Governor on additional camp construction needs and recommendations for the following fiscal year.

This bill would also appropriate \$3,580,000 from the General Fund to the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection to reactivate a 17-person crew at 17 specified conservation camps, to reactivate the camps and provide necessary training, vehicles, and equipment, appropriate \$11,000,000 to the department to reestablish a minimum security conservation camp at Green Valley in Sacramento County, appropriate \$2,400,000 from the General Fund to the department to construct and equip a 3-fire crew module minimum security work center at Cummings Valley in Kern County, and appropriate \$33,000,000 from the General Fund to construct and equip 3 new conservation camps in flood, fire, and earthquake prone areas of the state, as specified.

(2) This bill would declare that it is to take effect immediately as an urgency statute.

Vote:  $\frac{2}{3}$ . Appropriation: yes. Fiscal committee: yes. State-mandated local program: no.

*The people of the State of California do enact as follows:*

1 SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares the  
2 following:

3 (1) The Legislative Analyst's Office projects the state  
4 will need to provide additional space for as many as 27,000  
5 inmates by June 30, 2004. Current facilities are at 187  
6 percent of designed capacity.

7 (2) The number of fires and floods in California has  
8 increased dramatically during the last decade.  
9 Prevention of both of these types of natural disasters  
10 requires labor-intensive work.

11 (3) Each conservation camp inmate provides an  
12 annual return to the community of over twenty thousand  
13 dollars (\$20,000) in productive work, while costing  
14 taxpayers only thirteen thousand dollars (\$13,000) per  
15 year.

16 (4) Conservation camps provide significant  
17 rehabilitation benefits, as recidivism rates are lowered by  
18 the opportunity to learn strong work ethics, teamwork  
19 and job satisfaction, by assisting communities, farms, and  
20 the state's natural resources.



(5) Lower disciplinary and custodial costs result due to the fact that the hard-working emergency response team activities curtail disciplinary problems associated with idle time in prisons.

(6) Shortened incarceration time results for nonviolent inmates who reduce their sentence by performing meaningful work.

(7) Conservation camps have provided over 2,000,000 work-hours of emergency fire and flood assistance to the state and over 4,000,000 work-hours of resource, environmental, and community service in a single year.

(8) Minimum-security conservation centers cost less to construct than “hardwall” facilities and considerably less to operate.

SEC. 2. The Department of Corrections shall maximize the availability of conservation camp qualified inmates after the minimum health and safety requirements are met at other facilities of the department. Conservation camp qualified inmates shall not be used for routine maintenance duties, including gardening and trash collection, to the exclusion of meeting present and future conservation camp needs.

SEC. 3. It is the intent of the Legislature to continue to expand the conservation camp program to provide additional beds for low-level inmates and at the same time provide additional capabilities to prevent and deal with fire, flood, earthquake, and other emergencies in the State of California in a more cost-effective manner. Therefore, the Resources Secretary, after consultation with the Secretary of the Youth and Adult Correctional Agency and other benefiting agencies, shall by November 1, 2000, and each year thereafter, report to the Legislature and the Governor on additional camp construction needs and recommendations for the following fiscal year.

SEC. 4. (a) It is the intent of the Legislature that all existing conservation camps be operated at their designed strength in order to take full advantage of existing facilities and to be cost-effective and maintain discipline. Therefore, it is the intent of the Legislature

1 that an additional 20-person crew module be reactivated  
2 at each of the 17 conservation camps.

3 (b) The sum of three million five hundred eighty  
4 thousand dollars (\$3,580,000) is hereby appropriated  
5 from the General Fund to the Department of Forestry  
6 and Fire Protection, for the purpose of reactivating a  
7 17-person crew at each of the following 17 conservation  
8 camps, for the purpose of reactivating the camps and  
9 providing necessary training, vehicles, and equipment:  
10 Baseline, Bautista, Delta, Devils Garden, Eel River,  
11 Fenner Canyon, Gabilan, Growlersburg, McCain Valley,  
12 Oak Glen, Owens Valley, Preston/Pine Grove, Puerta La  
13 Cruz, Salt Creek, Sugar Pine, Trinity River, Valley View.

14 SEC. 5. The sum of eleven million dollars  
15 (\$11,000,000) is hereby appropriated from the General  
16 Fund to the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection  
17 for the purpose of reestablishing a minimum security  
18 conservation camp at Green Valley in Sacramento  
19 County, to accommodate six fire crews, totaling 120  
20 persons.

21 SEC. 6. The sum of two million four hundred  
22 thousand dollars (\$2,400,000) is hereby appropriated  
23 from the General Fund to the Department of Forestry  
24 and Fire Protection for the purpose of constructing and  
25 equipping a three-fire crew module minimum security  
26 work center at Cummings Valley in Kern County.

27 SEC. 7. The sum of thirty-three million dollars  
28 (\$33,000,000) is hereby appropriated from the General  
29 Fund to construct and equip the first three of  
30 approximately 15 new conservation camps in fire, flood,  
31 and earthquake prone areas of the state. These camps  
32 shall be established in areas designated jointly by the  
33 Director of Corrections and the Department of Forestry  
34 and Fire Protection based on studies currently underway  
35 by the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection and  
36 after consultation with local communities and counties.

37 SEC. 8. This act is an urgency statute necessary for the  
38 immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or  
39 safety within the meaning of Article IV of the

1 Constitution and shall go into immediate effect. The facts  
2 constituting the necessity are:

3 In order to determine conservation camp construction  
4 and other budgetary needs and thereby improve the  
5 ability of the conservation camp program to provide  
6 emergency services in event of fire, flood, or earthquake  
7 at the earliest possible time, it is necessary that this act  
8 take effect immediately.

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